

**NATIONAL TOWING SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NTSAC)  
TASK STATEMENT**

**TASK #21-04**

**I. TASK TITLE:**

Report on the Challenges Faced by the Towing Vessel Industry as a Result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

(Short Title: Covid-19 Impact)

**II. BACKGROUND:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted why mariners are “essential workers.” Without the professional and dedicated service of seafarers there is no Maritime Transportation System (MTS). And without the maritime transportation system, the United States is void of the ability to facilitate the shipment of waterborne cargo that contributes over \$500 billion to the U.S. GDP annually and accounts for the delivery of vital goods (to include medical supplies, foodstuffs, manufacturing materials, etc.) to ports scattered throughout the U. S, and the world. Bottom line, mariners and their ability to sustain the MTS, are a central component to empowering the U.S. with the tools and resources necessary for responding to and overcoming this pandemic.

**III. DISCUSSION:**

In an effort to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 on the shipping industry, the CDC provides guidance for ships originating from or porting in the United States to help prevent, detect, report, and medically manage suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases (Enclosure 1). Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard has published material that highlights and provides resources that seek to temper the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of merchant mariners (Enclosure 2).

The purpose of this task statement is for NTSAC members to report the impacts of the COVID-19 on the towing vessel industry to the U.S. Coast Guard. The report should include an analysis of the guidance provided by both the CDC and the U.S. Coast Guard (discussed above) and its applicability to towing vessel operations. Additionally, NTSAC should take this opportunity to discuss other challenges that have been confronted by the towing vessel industry during this unprecedented time.

#### IV. TASKING:

NTSAC will prepare a final report for the U.S. Coast Guard that provides analysis and discussion on the following topics:

1. Discuss the guidance provided by the CDC in Enclosure (1) and provide analysis of its application to towing vessel operations. In its report, NTSAC members should identify industry best practices for the most effective means of stopping infection from coming aboard towing vessels as well as responding to towing vessel crew infections.
2. Discuss the guidance provided by the United States Coast Guard in Enclosure (2) and provide analysis of its application to towing vessel operations. In its report, NTSAC members should identify industry best practices for protecting the mental health of essential workers.
3. Discuss the treatment of mariners by port and facility operators and any associated impacts regarding access rules.
4. The report should account for unique circumstances that differentiate the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on towing vessel operations.
5. The report may also provide suggestions/best practices for specific issues that fall outside of the scope of the CDC guidance and/or the United States Coast Guard guidance respectively.

#### V. ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE TASK

NTSAC will provide a Draft Final Report to the Coast Guard at its fall 2022 meeting.

#### VII. COAST GUARD TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVE:

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#### VIII. NTSAC CONTACT

Angie Fay - Chair  
Joy Terrel - Vice Chair

#### IX. ENCLOSURES:

Enclosure (1): Interim Guidance for Ships on Managing Suspected or Confirmed Cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

<https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/maritime/recommendations-for-ships.html>

Enclosure (2): MSIB Number: 07-21, "COVID-19 Spotlight on the Mental Health of Mariners"